

A Catalyst for Change:

Asset-Based Community Development and the Catalytic Role of the “Outsider”

What is Asset-Based Community Development?!

- Capacity-focused: what's already there?
- Internally-focused: what's best for us?
- Relationship-driven: connecting internal resources

Why is ABCD important?

- Because it creates a sustainable solution:
 - Resources already present in the community
 - Independent of inconsistent external aid
 - *Significant change only happens when residents commit to invest themselves and their resources*

How is ABCD applied?

- Map assets—individuals, associations, institutions
- Build relationships—mutually beneficial problem solving
- Mobilize for economic development and information sharing
- Develop a shared vision and plan
- Leverage outside resources

Mapping Assets

- Focus on strengths and resources already present in the community:
 - Skills of the people
 - Specific job-related, special interests and experiences
 - Strengths of associations and societies
 - Citizens working on focused issue—mobilization of vested interests
 - Resources of local institutions
 - Funding? Functional space? Expertise? Media exposure?

Build Relationships

- Mutually beneficial problem solving
- Internal connections within community
- Increase interdependence
- Help to reduce imports, increase exports

Mobilize for Economic Development and Information Sharing

- Decrease dependency on external resources
- Increase self-sufficiency
- Ideally, increase exports while maintaining self-sufficiency
- Strengthen the “village well”

Convene Community to Develop a Vision and Plan

- Establish common identity
- Develop a broadly-held vision
- Create an action plan to realize vision
 - Begin with assets
 - Include a diverse representation
 - Combine planning with problem solving

Leverage Outside Resources

- LAST STEP
- Complementary to local resources
- “Leverage” important—denotes community ability to direct resources

Applying the ABCD idea

How would you approach the following community concerns (taken from the East Biloxi Community Plan, June 2006) utilizing the ABCD method?

Scenarios

- Rebuild housing stock of East Biloxi
- Create safer neighborhood
- Create and maintain neighborhood parks and rec space
- Restore and raise the level of excellence of schools
- Create diverse job opportunities

Remember the five steps:

- Map assets—individuals, associations, institutions
- Build relationships—mutually beneficial problem solving
- Mobilize for economic development and information sharing
- Develop a shared vision and plan
- Leverage outside resources

Role of the “Outsider” in ABCD: a Catalyst for Change

cat·a·lyst (noun):

1. Chemistry. a substance that causes or accelerates a chemical reaction without itself being affected.
2. something that causes activity between two or more persons or forces without itself being affected.
3. a person or thing that precipitates an event or change: *His imprisonment by the government served as the catalyst that helped transform social unrest into revolution.*
4. a person whose talk, enthusiasm, or energy causes others to be more friendly, enthusiastic, or energetic.

Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1) Based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2006.

How Can We Act as a Catalyst?

- Change community's image of itself
 - Behavior is based on the way people see themselves
 - *What is our community's view of itself?*
 - **Passivity ---> active agent of development**
 - Identify and recognize strength and capacity
 - *How does HOGC do this now?*

Acting as a Catalyst (cont.)

- Connect people with each other and with resources
 - EVERYONE has something to contribute
- Affirm the community's real situation
 - Without illusions or false hope
 - Acknowledge active participation of community
 - Facilitate community's realization of how it contributes/perpetuates problems—reveal how they can help solve it

Acting as a Catalyst (cont.)

- Build practical plans of action
 - Mobilize resources
 - Accomplish real goals
 - Keep in mind, *residents are the primary implementers of the plan*
- **“Never do something for people that they can do for themselves”**

Attributes of the Catalyst

- Accountable to the community
 - Upfront about role and intentions
 - Consistency
- “Shared austerity”
 - Share in community experiences (“When in Rome...”)
- Has an agenda
 - Coherent strategy, real goals
 - Act with clarity and consistency, while remaining politely firm

Attributes (cont.)

- Leverage external resources
 - “Outside help” implies community is “needy”
 - Timing is crucial (though sometimes uncontrollable)
 - “Leverage” important---community-directed use of resources
 - Should complement and support communities

Resources

- For more resources on the subject of ABCD, visit:

http://www.publicallies.org/site/c.liKUL3PNLvF/b.3121231/k.968A/ABCD_Institute_Publications.htm